



Story and photos by MND-NE PAO

Zaytun Hospital treats 40,000 patients

A 76 year-old woman from a small village near Irbil, Iraq, entered the Republic of Korea's Zaytun Hospital in a wheelchair pushed by her son on the hot morning of July 18, amid thunderous applause from fellow Iraqi patients.

Mariam Mhiadin become the 40,000 patient admitted to the hospital since it was opened November 27, 2004.

During the brief ceremony, Republic of Korea Lt. Col. Lee Hae-Seol, commander, ROK Division's Medical Battalion, handed flowers and gifts to Mhiadin and other patients in front of a beaming hospital staff.

"The 40,000 visitor is not really a cause for celebration," he said. "It is more of a chance to reflect on the on the pain the locals are going through, and to remind ourselves of the work that needs to be done for more devoted treatment."

After welcoming its 10,000 local visitor in the hospitals first six months of operations, the Zaytun Hospital treated 20,000 patients in its first year.

This year, it took only seven months to match the last year's total as word of the staff's kindness and skill spread; more patients started coming, some as far as three to four hours away in the Dahuk and Sulaymaniyah Provinces.

The 40,000 visitor brought much joy and relief from the busy work and a chance to look back at the patients that have been treated, said ROK Capt. Kim Keun-Hwan, surgeon, Zaytun Hospital.

"I especially remember this little girl who suffered a serious burn all over her body," he continued. "She was in great despair, but we could treat her really well. Giving life back and spreading love is really all medicine is about. Hopefully I can keep doing that



here for a long time.”

Admittance to the hospital requires a ticket given at local clinics operated by the Kurdish Regional Government Ministry of Health, and by the Zaytun Mobile Clinic Unit that visits remote areas that do not have access to the KRG clinics.

The ticket is a much sought-after item, reflecting the hospital's soaring popularity in the region. In a letter to the hospital, Mohammad Qadir Koshnow, minister of health, KRG, thanked the hospital for its role in helping to save the lives of the local citizens.

“Along with the (Korean) reconstruction projects, the Zaytun Hospital's work is playing a vital role in saving many lives in Salaymaniyah and Irbil,” Koshnow said.

The Koreans work in promoting the medical condition in the region goes beyond the walls of the Zaytun Hospital.

The Division has provided the KRG and the regions' clinics with various medical supplies such as eight ambulances and 450 wheelchairs at a cost of 3.6 million dollars.

The Zaytun Hospital also ran an intensive eight-week internship program starting December 2004, for



local doctors and nurses that were recommended by the KRG with the hope of growing a local pool of skilled medical personnel.

The Zaytun Hospital has 18 Korean military doctors and 33 staff members, including five local doctors, who specialize in twelve fields to include general surgery and internal medicine.

The hospital boasts state-of-the-art facilities in two operating rooms and 30 recovery rooms, and has treated patients with various ailments—from terrorist attacks to those with toothaches.

(Left) A Korean dentist gives a man from Irbil, Iraq, a dental evaluation at the Zaytun Hospital, July 18. (Above) An optometrist checks the eyes of a local woman. (Right) A Korean doctor exams the inner ear of an Iraqi man at the Zaytun Hospital, Irbil, Iraq. It took 19 months for the hospital to serve 40,000 patients.

